
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address: **1620 7th Street NW**
Landmark/District: **Shaw Historic District**
ANC: **6E**

Meeting Date: **May 2, 2013**
H.P.A. Number: **#13-206**
Staff Reviewer: **Brendan Meyer**

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The applicant, owner Steve Kalifa, seeks concept approval for a new three-story brick attached building at 1620 7th Street NW which is currently a vacant lot in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Architectural Solutions LLC.



Figure 1. Proposal for 1620 7th Street NW (red), all other buildings existing.

Property Description and Context

The site is vacant. It sits at the north end of a row of nine Victorian rowhouses built during the 1880s and 1890s. This collection of two and three story buildings is typical of the contributing buildings in the Shaw Historic District along 7th Street NW. Built as residential buildings, almost all have been converted to commercial use on the ground floor and as such show a great variety of storefronts. In contrast, the upper floors have remained largely intact and show off robust metal, wood, and brick cornices and an equally spaced rhythm of punched window openings ornamented with brick and metal hoods.

The site is in the far northeast corner of the historic district, just below Rhode Island Avenue. The building to the north is a one-story commercial building ensuring that the north side profile of 1620 will be visible.

Proposal

A three-story brick building with a commercial ground floor with residences above is proposed for 1620 7th Street. The ground floor is centered on a small projecting show-window and flanked on either side by a door, one for the commercial ground floor and one for the stairs up to the residences. The storefront is capped by a continuous metal canopy. The second and third floors are fenestrated with punched window openings with segmental arch brick headers. The front façade is capped by a wood cornice with brackets and a rectilinear pattern of square appliques in the frieze between brackets.

The north side wall is a blank, brick party wall. It has a profile that steps down in sections as it follows the low-sloped roof from front to back. An enclosed stair tower at the rear of the building is engaged with the north wall and gives this side of the building a chamfered profile at the back upper corner.

Evaluation

The proposal substantially fits into the pattern of heights, fenestration and ornament that give the existing row of buildings on this block of 7th Street their historic character. The three story height of the building is like a bookend to the row just like the historic three story building at the other end of the row (1602 7th Street). The side profile of the building is plain and straightforward as one would expect of a building from the era of the historic district. While the cornice is not an exact replica of a Victorian cornice, it captures the proportions and hierarchy of such. The windows of the upper floors align with the rest of the row and are sufficiently slender in proportion that they fill the front façade with the right balance of solid and void.

Some detailing and proportion of the ground floor can be improved to better match the character of the row. In particular, the height of the storefront could be raised or a series of transom windows inserted above the canopy. These details can be developed and finalized in consultation with Staff as final drawings for the building permit are prepared.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for a new three-story rear building at 1620 7th Street NW compatible with the character of the Shaw Historic District, consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, and that final approval be delegated to staff

No part of this recommendation shall be construed as a recommendation for approval or disapproval for any necessary zoning relief or interpretation.